

4th and ultimately final draft.
12/31/82

Statement of Common Objectives in the Study of
Unidentified Flying Objects

We the undersigned, representing the spectrum of thought regarding the reality and scientific importance of Unidentified Flying Objects, recognize that unless we work together, UFOs will probably remain a thorn in the side of science well into the 21st century.

Our first objective is to clarify the term "UFO" which, more than merely meaning "Unidentified Flying Object", will henceforth encompass the following concepts inclusively:

(a) Reported aerial phenomena which exhibit sufficient strangeness to warrant investigation

(b) Phenomena which, following exhaustive expert investigation, remain unidentified as any known natural phenomena

(c) Phenomena which remain unidentified not for lack of credible scientific data, but despite such data

(d) Phenomena which are not only "unidentified", but which appear to be "unidentifiable" at this point in man's scientific development, seeming to exhibit evidence of an aspect or domain of the natural world not yet understood by science.

(e) Phenomena which often appear to exhibit evidence of intelligent control

(f) Phenomena which, rather than being exceedingly rare, are being reported frequently by many witnesses around the world

Some of us are presently of the opinion that UFOs, as defined above, exist. Some of us are of the opinion that UFOs do not exist. Others of us may yet to be persuaded in either direction. But we all acknowledge the following:

(a) that a bipartisan scientific inquiry into UFO reality is necessary in an attempt to adjudicate the issue

(b) that although reasonable scientists may disagree as to the reality and scientific importance of the UFO phenomenon, all must agree to abide by the scientific method of inquiry

(c) that such a scientific inquiry places the burden of proof of UFO reality (as defined above) on the proponent

(d) that the more extraordinary the claim, the more substantial the proof required

(e) that as of the issuance of this Statement, some small residue of UFO reports remains to be conclusively explained to the satisfaction of all, although the scientific importance of this residue has yet to be conclusively demonstrated

(f) that the common goal of the community of UFOlogy must be to remove the aura of mystery of UFOs by endeavoring to discover the nature and scientific importance of the reports, wherever that endeavor may lead.

In pursuance of our stated goal, we agree to the formation of a perennial bipartisan "UFO Conference Committee", to consist of six members (three who tend toward UFO reality, and three who are considerably more skeptical). This Committee will endeavor to apply the scientific method to selected worthy UFO cases, assess the reality and scientific importance of each case, and issue unanimous conclusions.

Whether or not our effort will prove successful remains to be seen. We embark upon this endeavor in good faith, in the hope that we may hasten the day when UFOs no longer represent an emotional and divisive issue among the scientific community and the general public.

(Signed)

Fourth draft
12/31/82
Gary P. Posner, M.D.
Marcello Truzzi, Ph.D.



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Sept. 12, 1982

Dear Dr. Posner:

Forgive my delay in writing you, but I seem to be swamped lately. By now you should have received a copy of my reply letter to Moseley. I got your letters of Sept. 2 and 3 (though in reverse order on two delivery days). Let me run down your Sept. 2 letter paragraph by paragraph.

Perhaps I misjudged your meaning re your sending your letter to me to others. Frankly, I may have done this because Klass repeatedly sends copies of his letters to me to unspecified others (e.g., to "et al." or to "the Truzzi fan club") and my association of you with Klass probably made me overly sensitive about it.

I think you misunderstood me re what I mean by "unidentified." Obviously, Hynek and others who are actually agnostic about the explanation for UFOs may frequently conjecture that they may be ETs. I do not for a moment suggest that ETs should be excluded from the UFO category if the ET conjecture is in the form of an hypothesis (preferably among others). I have nothing against the ETH as an hypothesis (as the H states). I do not discount an ET possibility as a reasonable possible future explanation for some UFOs. But I think that many UFO proponents are not offering the ETH as an hypothesis at all (the way Hynek has done) but as a (to their mind) confirmed solution to the mystery. For example, I think Stanton Friedman goes beyond merely conjecturing ET origins; he seems to me to offering the ETH as his explanation for UFOs (just as Klass offers his unknown-flying-plasmas conjecture as a solution rather than as a possible solution very much in need of validation).

The important thing is that the parties involved be able to distinguish between the hypotheses which they think might offer a solution and the state of the evidence for any particular such hypotheses. I agree that Hynek is more hospitable to the ETH than you or I might be, but he does not offer it as more than a hypothesis at this point. The central thing about Hynek's view is that he thinks (a) there is a legitimate puzzle to be solved in a residue of "unexplained" UFO cases, (b) that current explanations offered from "normal" science do not seem capable of dealing with the facts established about such cases, and (c) it seems likely that new scientific principles or information, beyond that found in our current dominant science viewpoints, must be found to resolve the problem. Hynek does indeed think that some important stuff is happening with this residuum and that it may be pointing us to important new theory or even a paradigmatic shift of some sort. On the other hand, Klass and others seem to be saying that the residuum is probably explainable in terms of "normal" (i.e., current) science and does not point the way to any big breakthrough. Neither Hynek nor Klass have a clear basis upon which to say whether or not the eventual explanation will be truly significant for science. [Strangely, Klass does indicate in his first book that the plasma solution he offers is of great importance for further scientific work (re weather modification, etc.); so both Hynek and Klass actually seem to

agree that the problem of a residue exists and that its solution (though Klass thinks he already knows it) is of importance for the future elaboration of science. On the other hand, Oberg and Sheaffer do not see the likely solutions to the residuum as that significant for science.]

Hynek does indeed believe that the UFO solution is going to be a "quantum jump" in our outlook in science. He thinks something terrifically important is going on. And this is because he simply does not see conventional sorts of explanations offering a solution to the residuum of cases. But this does not mean that he is not in fact an agnostic about what UFOs may be. He suspects, but he does not claim to know.

Re your new definition of UFOs, I don't find it objectionable. In looking at your earlier definition again, it is not directly objectionable as I had at first thought. I see now that the problem between us really concerns the problem of what we mean by calling someone like Hynek a believer. By the definitions you have given, Hynek is a believer in the sense that he is inclined to think that UFOs are in fact "unidentifiable" given the current state of the scientific art. But belief that UFOs are currently unidentified and that the ETH is a reasonable conjecture is not the same as saying that such a set of beliefs makes one a believer in the ET solution. You will recall that I earlier said that someone who believes in the ET solution does not really believe that the FOs are Unidentified. I would quite agree with you that Hynek is a believer in UFOs, as unidentified. So am I. I do believe that a legitimate set of puzzle cases continue to exist. I don't claim to know the solution, only that a mystery is still with us.

Now the point here is that belief that no solution exists is what most people would call a skeptical viewpoint. Hynek is a skeptic towards all offered solutions. Hynek happens to be more willing to give a good probability rating to such proposed solutions as the ETH and the psychic other-realities hypotheses than I am. But he remains a skeptic towards all sides. The thing he is not skeptical about it is that an important puzzle exists. This has two components: that a puzzle exists and that its solution will turn out to be important for science. I agree with the former but am skeptical about the latter. I think you are skeptical towards both the reality of a legitimate puzzle and the likelihood of its solution being important to science. Obviously, the importance of the puzzle to science will actually depend upon what we see as its likely solutions. And the character of the solutions is hinged to just how we see the puzzle. That is why I personally believe reasonable people can differ at this point about the importance of the puzzle and its solution. But I do not think reasonable people can believe that the puzzle is illegitimate, that all the loose ends have been neatly explained away by the UFO critics.

Re Hynek's seeming role as a proponent, I in part agree with your perception. First, of course, he is mainly a proponent of the idea that a real puzzle exists independent of any solutions. We must not forget that. But when it comes to specific cases, he tends to usually approach those in light of that first commitment. Sometimes I think he does so badly. Let me take two examples. In the case of Father Gill, I would agree with Hynek that we have no current explanation for his report (and those of the others who signed his report). Klass's and Menzel's explanations are, for me, quite inadequate. My own inclination is to think that perhaps Gill did

see a secret U.S. craft of some sort--as he at first thought it was himself. But I frankly don't know; it merely seems more reasonable to me than the ETH offered. Like so many things where human testimony is involved, there are simply more questions than answers. I think that Hynek in part cites this case because it particularly well demonstrates (a) multiple witness reports, and (b) no current explanation, but also (c) is a bit of a reaction against the silly explanations that critics have offered. Re (c), I think the case tends to evoke a stronger defense than it should simply because it has been attacked so badly.

Let's take another case. The Betty/Barney Hill case is pretty clearly a phoney. Hynek goes on a talk show with Betty and infuriates people like Phil (and sometimes me, too) by not making it clear to the audience listening/watching that Hynek does not believe it was a legitimate C-III encounter. Instead, Hynek tends to say something like "I don't doubt that Mrs. Hill had a real experience of some sort." This kind of ambiguous reaction, I suspect, infuriates you, too. Yet, I think we need to keep in mind Hynek's purposes. I am sure--based on our conversations--that he does not believe that the Hills' claims are true as reported. But he does think they went through some sort of traumatic experience (independent of anything ET). Hynek is particularly anxious to get people in the audience to be willing to come forward to his Center with reports of their own experiences. It is well documented that a great many people with experiences to report simply do not publicly do so for fear of ridicule. Hynek wants to create a safe climate for reports to come in. His purpose is not to "debunk" Betty on the air. I do wish myself that he would make his skepticism more public with such cases. But I can also see that he properly needs to encourage reports that might otherwise stay in the closet. Also, he knows full well that Klass and others will be out there to attack her.

Now don't misunderstand me. I do not by any means approve of all that Hynek does. I have told him so many times. I have strongly urged him, for example, to explicitly open up CUFOS to its critics and publicly recognize that Klass and others can properly be called Ufologists since ufology means merely applying scientific method to the question of UFOs, not any particular conclusions about them. In principle, Hynek says he agrees with me. But the problem seems to be on a personal level. Klass has (allegedly) done some pretty rotten things (e.g, tried to get Hynek removed from an editorial position with a publisher), so Hynek simply does not want to interact with Klass. I also don't like Hynek's financial dependence upon Ufological matters; he is not a totally disinterested party. But on balance, I see nothing really terrible about Hynek or his views to the point that I think it calls for public denunciations.

Re the matter of agnosticism, you simply are in error, and I refer you to Huxley's essays, especially one reprinted in Gordon Stein's collection on atheism done for Prometheus Press (of all places!). Huxley was opposed to the Rationalists who felt that everything was ultimately knowable through the use of reason. Huxley did not mean merely an attitude towards the question of deity as many today seem to think. It was a general skepticism he promulgated. Anyway, I have found this general literature quite confused (including Gordon Stein's own account of it), so I refer you directly to Huxley. You are correct in part regarding the original use of the term skeptic as one who doubts the validity of general knowledge. but I would contend that is still the case, which is why I insist that someone like myself who doubts all claims of certain knowledge is a true skeptic whereas those of you who express doubts about only anomalous claims are not true skeptics. And those of you who deny rather than doubt anomalous claims are

further misusing the term skeptic (doubter).

I don't understand your failure to understand how I can refer to premature debunking. Obviously, I hope, I mean by that an alleged debunking which actually does not have the contrary evidence to sustain the claim that a debunking has actually taken place. It seems to me that Klass rather frequently does just that. He thinks he has dispelled the claims of an extraordinary set of reports of UFOs by "debunking" or explaining them away as mere rare plasmas; but he does not make a solid case for his plasma conjectures. He insists that Father Gill is lying but presents an unconvincing case for such a debunking. It is not premature to divest a UFO case of false claims; it is premature to claim to divest it of such when you really have not adequately made a case for such divesting.

Either I was unclear or you misunderstood me re the matter of needing evidence beyond mere conjecture when offering a counterexplanation. I do not have anything against Klass or anyone offering alternative conjectures about how a report may be due to a mundane cause. But such conjectures are regularly offered by critics of UFO reports as though the mere conjecturing of them establishes their truth. They normally are thus treated as "the truth of the matter" on an argument from parsimony. But parsimony requires that the simplest adequate explanation be the preferred one. For many of us, simply saying that a reporter of an encounter with a UFO might be lying when that reporter has a general history of honesty and such a characterization of him as a hoaxer does not adequately fit the known facts about him, constitutes what is really neither a simpler nor an adequate alternative explanation. Too often, it is conjectured that a reporter is lying, and when the question of a motive is raised, further conjectures are offered about possible motives. This conjecture added to conjecture is intended to strengthen the case when it actually weakens it. Often even these conjectures are seemingly contradicted by other evidence in the case; but the debunker is convinced that the possibility of a "real UFO" (in your terms) is so implausible that such extraordinary conjectures of counterexplanation seem preferable. I do not mind Klass or others raising conjectures about possible motives for lying, etc. But Klass then usually goes on to conclude that he has established that such lying took place. That is nonsense and tends to encourage that we treat the matter as "solved" and ignore it rather than admit puzzles and press on to properly investigate them. This is because Klass is more interested in "explaining away" the reports than in truly explaining them in proper scientific fashion. He wants to dismiss them as unworthy of being taken seriously. Since the first obligation of a scientist (here I follow C.S. Peirce) is to do nothing that might block inquiry, such an approach borders on the anti-scientific and replaces authoritarian dogma (of implausibility) for active investigation.

You seem to have the mistaken idea that I do not think there is a role for your sort of skeptic. To the contrary, I am pleased that Klass and you others are out there advocating the negative. You often come up with excellent arguments and evidence.

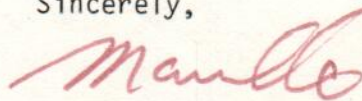
I don't understand your comments about the Father Gill ^{case} being put forward as a classic case "without a shred of evidence." Gill's testimony is evidence, and more important, so is the testimony of the others who signed the document reporting the sighting. The question must be: What evidence other than the implausibility of the tale do you or Klass have to offer that Gill is lying?

You ask if I would be willing to help Klass prove UFO witnesses were lying by devoting CSAR resources to arranging polygraph tests for such witnesses. With qualifications, yes. The qualifications are: (1) I would do it to try to learn the truth of the matter rather than to "assist Klass" in proving they were liars; (2) the literature on lie detection demonstrates clearly that polygraphs are actually not very good sources of evidence. (Would Phil treat passage of a polygraph as proof that the witness was telling the truth? I hope not for that would be equally foolish.). I think polygraph tests would be useful indeed, and I would encourage witnesses to take them. But I do not--as does Phil--take refusal to take a polygraph to be evidence that the witness is lying and afraid of such a test. If I saw a UFO, and Phil demanded that I take a polygraph or he would call me a liar, I think I would be insulted and refuse to cooperate with Phil. On the other hand, I think UFO proponents should encourage their witnesses to take polygraphs as a means of protecting themselves and adding credibility to their stories in light of the opposition and charges of lying that are inevitably going to be hurled at them. It is quite one thing for an innocent man to voluntarily seek a lie detector test to show the world he is honest; it is quite another thing for others of us to demand such tests from persons we should presume to be honest. For similar reasons, I disapprove of employers in stores demanding polygraph tests for their employees. And, of course, the courts would seem to agree with me about the problems of polygraphs as evidence. They are not that reliable. But how important are such tests in most cases? I think Betty Hill, for example, believes her long-told tale of abduction. A polygraph test would merely reveal that she believed it, I think; it would not establish the tale's validity. Even her psychiatrist agrees that she did undergo some sort of real trauma (though not a UFO experience). What would polygraphing her accomplish? But on general principle, I do think polygraphs should be used more than they are, and I would indeed do what I could to see they were used on UFO witnesses as part of the truth-seeking rather lie-proving strategy. What I object to here is that Phil is rather like the anti-communists who protest that a truly honest man would not invoke the 5th amendment in his defense. I think Phil wants to make more out of a refusal to take a polygraph than he would be willing to make of a successful polygraph result.

You ask me to detail a case of Phil's resorting to character assassination. I think the Father Gill case is a good example. But I refer you to Jerry Clark's essay on Klass in FATE which goes into some detail on this issue. I could go into specifics now, but this letter is already too long. I presume the issue here is merely his dealing with UFO matters, so his ad hominem attacks on many other people (like Rawlins, myself, and others) is not at issue between us. I can only refer you for now to the many critical papers answering Klass which demonstrate nicely what I am talking about re his ad hominem attacks. If you find such analyses unconvincing, I doubt that I could say anything to you that would be more convincing.

I think I sent you the materials on CSAR, etc. with my copy of my letter to Moseley. Sorry I somehow forgot to include that with my first letter. To insure against my failing to do it again, I enclose the stuff (again?) now. As I said earlier, I very much invite you (and Klass) to be resource consultants for CSAR.

Sincerely,



Marcello Truzzi

P.S. I am sure I have not directly tackled all your points in this rambling letter. But I hope it clarifies some things at issue between us. And if it reveals that we may not disagree as much as we thought, so much the better. To the degree that our differences are due to misunderstandings, let me assure you that I think that is something about which I should not apologize but something I should be pleased to learn.

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September 16, 1982

Dear Marcello,

By virtue of the nature of your letter of Sept. 12, I think we can proceed on a first name basis. In fact, I think it may even be possible to do what has so far proven impossible. I think the two of us may be able to draft some sort of statement to be signed by most if not all of the leading Ufologists, outlining our common objectives, and initiating a bipartisan approach toward the investigation of selected worthy UFO cases. After all, if Moseley is the Voltaire of Ufology, why cannot I aspire to be the Kissinger of Ufology?

Enclosed is my rough idea of the type of statement that might be acceptable to all. Ideally, we should seek to garner all of the following signatures, plus those of any others who are interested in working together:

Klass, Sheaffer, Oberg (representing CSICOP)
Hynek, Truzzi, Maccabee, Sturrock, Andrus, Lorenzen,
Schuessler, Spaulding (representing their respective
organizations---did I omit anyone comparable?)

My conception also includes the formation of a "UFO Conference Committee" patterned after that of the U.S. Congress (i.e. containing members of two "houses" or opposing viewpoints working to find common ground). Our Committee could consist of a group similar (if not identical) to the panel of six who participated in the 1980 Smithsonian UFO Symposium. Someone could serve in Durant's position as referee (perhaps Durant; perhaps people on a rotational basis; perhaps you and I could be co-referees initially). Committee members could communicate*with each other directly, or via the referee, who could also direct his own questions/comments to members.

This is all very tentative, and perhaps if I had gotten a little more sleep last night, I wouldn't be having these delusions at this moment. But the Smithsonian symposium will have served no lasting purpose unless the proponents and skeptics (modern-day usage) continue the dialogue, and work in concert to arrive at the truth regarding individual UFO cases deemed worthy of intensive study.

My plan may prove to be too ambitious as it is, but if it should come to fruition, and prove useful, perhaps another such Committee could be formed to deal with other "anomalies". Although I would anticipate some problems in putting together an agreement between all parties, I doubt the task would prove to be much more difficult than was Philip Habib's in Lebanon recently. What do you think?

* via mail or phone out of their homes,
not as a group en mass





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Oct. 17, 1982

Dear Gary,

Here I finally am in regard to your letters of Sept. 16. Between mislaying them and getting inundated with other stuff, I apologize again for my delay.

First off, let me remark on your suggestion for a joint statement. I very very much approve of what you essentially have in mind. We need to carve out the areas of real agreement and common interest. (In fact, I have been doing something very similar over the last few months in conjunction with critics and proponents of parapsychology with the aim of a kind of manifesto to be published in a near-future issue of ZETETIC SCHOLAR.) Before turning directly to your proposed statement (which you indicate was meant as a rough one at this point), let me make a couple of general points perhaps worth considering based on what I have come up with in the psi area effort I've been similarly working on.

It seems to me that the important thing is to get both proponents and critics to emphasize the scientific character of the problem and the desire to exclude non-scientific (e.g., metaphysical, mystical, theological, and similar) issues. The point here is that both sides have to explicitly state that they accept the normal rules of the scientific game (burden of proof on the claimant, proof commensurate with the degree of extraordinariness of the claim, falsifiability of statements, etc.). This is important not only because it can make clear the common rules for adjudication but also to exclude the fringe people who may really be doing something else. These sorts of admissions are particularly important for the proponents to make for the sake of the critics. For the most part, this sort of thing should produce no serious problems for the legitimate Ufologists (Hendry, etc.). On the other hand, it is imperative that the critics of UFOs publicly state that (a) there may be a legitimate problematic area (perhaps capable of mundane explanations at some future point) which admittedly represents an area needing further investigation. That is, the critics need to say (along with the proponents) that some small residue of so-called UFO cases still represent some problems for explanation in a full sense. This is fundamental since critics are perceived by proponents as simply saying there is no legitimate problem area here at all, that it is all a concoction of mystery mongers. I do not ask the critics to say that these problem areas are especially serious ones or are incapable of solution or even tentative explanations right now. The important thing is to get the legitimacy of the questions agreed upon irrespective of the answers that may be forthcoming. (b) The critics need to grant that there remain areas (unspecified) where reasonable persons might still differ about some of these matters. I think if these two things were in the statement, proponents would be far less suspicious of the critics, and it would go a long way in building some bridges between parties.

Proponents need to say some parallel things which I think they really believe but usually avoid outright admitting. They need to flatly state that the character and importance of the UFO problem has not been conclusively demonstrated. They must admit that reasonable persons can look at the evidence and still remain skeptical (meaning unconvinced rather than dismissing).

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The proponents need to explicitly state that they desire whatever solution science may properly come up with for UFOs, that they are not committed to any particular explanation (e.g., ETH). They must also state that the goal of Ufology must be to identify UFOs, not to mystery monger. They can certainly state that they are personally convinced by the evidence and that they think other reasonable persons looking carefully at it should recognize that there are cases both enigmatic and possibly important; but they must publicly state that they recognize that this is not the same as having made a scientifically convincing case that these phenomena represent something outside of current known science and potentially of great value for science.

Both sides need to acknowledge that they and science can benefit most from responsible interchanges of argument and evidence between proponents and critics. Both sides need to recognize that there has been a basic problem in that each has seen the other side as irresponsible and appealing to non-scientific arguments and evidence. This should be an effort by each side to publicly acknowledge that the other side can contribute positively to the resolution of the UFO problem -- wherever that solution may lead, either mundane explanations or revolutionary new knowledge. Unless both sides indicate some degree of trust and peer respect for one another's best advocates, there can be no real dialogue at all.

The proponents need to admit that Ufology is basically a research program for scientific investigation into alleged anomalies. They need to admit publicly (most will admit it privately) that Ufology is a fledgling protoscience and quite embryonic still. It is still too early to know if the embryo will mature and develop or abort through miscarriage. On the other hand, the critics need to publicly acknowledge that Ufology (like any science) is a scientific research program in so far as it follows scientific method; that being a scientific research program does not depend upon the reality of UFOs at all. You don't have to be a believer to be a Ufologist. You only have to recognize the legitimacy of using scientific methods to study the questions involved with reports of UFOs.

The central point to all this is that (a) both sides need to publicly emphasize their common allegiance to scientific method, (b) and recognize that the other parties share that same allegiance, and (c) that therefore to at least some degree reasonable scientists can differ about the reality and meaning of UFOs.

I think that the main people on both sides really share these views but they seldom come out openly. Both sides are often too busy proselytizing for converts to the pro or con camps and lose sight of what scientific investigation is really about all -- letting the chips fall where they may according to argument and evidence. It is not a question of one side or the other winning a debate. It is a question of advancing science or not.

Now what I suggest here may have obstacles on both sides. Neither side trusts the other very much. There has been a lot of nastiness, probably on both sides. Lots of fragile egos are involved. But, if I read you right, a third force may yet emerge that can transcend such petty matters and get on with the real business: responsibly and adequately explaining the mysterious residue of UFO cases.

Let me turn now to your explicit "Statement." The key area is your second paragraph. Let me offer the following re-writing for your consideration.

" Our first objective is to clarify our joint use of the term "UFO" which, in our usage here, is meant to state not only that the aerial phenomena constitute something "unidentified" but also represent:

- (a) a reported aerial phenomenon which exhibits sufficient strangeness to warrant investigation;
- (b) phenomena which, following exhaustive expert investigations, cannot be adequately identified as any known natural phenomena;
- (c) phenomena which remain unidentified not for lack of credible scientific data but despite such data;
- (d) phenomena which is not only "unidentified," but which appears to be "unidentifiable" at this point in our scientific development, seeming to exhibit evidence of an aspect or domain of the natural world not yet understood by science;
- (e) phenomena that appear not to be exceedingly rare but are related to reports being generated frequently by many witnesses around the world;
- (f) phenomena that seem to under the control of some form of intelligence."

Note that on the one hand I have made some small changes to--I think--accommodate the proponents, but I have also added (f) to perhaps even further appeal to the critics.

I have personally always been bothered by the "flying object" part of the UFO term. I have little reason to think it is flying (under intelligent control) and good reason to think many reports do not actually sight solid objects.

I think the idea of this Committee making bipartisan statements might prove very useful where there is full agreement. And I think unanimity should be surprisingly common and should be sought by careful wording of the joint statements. But I have some doubts about the value of having non-unanimous statements with dissenting opinions attached. This is largely because I think you have a far more solid bloc on the critics' side than you have on the proponents' side right at the outset. The UFO people you mention are not in that much communication with one another, for the most part. But the critics are all part of the CSICOP subcommittee. Why not have something like this: Oberg (CSICOP), Hendry (CUFOS), Westrum (CSAR), Sturrock (SSE), Sheaffer (independent), and Taves (independent). Obviously, Sheaffer and Taves are both connected with CSICOP, but I simply can not think of any prominent anti-UFO person still living who is not part of the CSICOP. Note that I have left out Hynek, Klass, myself and you quite intentionally. I'd like to get some better balance, but this committee would make some sense in terms of representing a real spectrum of views. You may think of Hendry, Westrum and Sturrock as alike, but they really are not. Having Klass and Hynek on the same committee seems unlikely since Hynek generally wants nothing to do with Klass; thus my putting Hendry and Oberg there instead for CUFOS and CSICOP. What do you think?

Finally, let me turn briefly to a point in your accompanying "companion letter." You are correct in noting that there is a potential conflict between the scientific and legal model, but I think you neglect a point I have raised earlier. It is not really an either/or situation for science as it is in law. To say, as I do, that (e.g.,) Father Gill has not made a convincing or conclusive case for his alleged encounter for me to believe he witnessed a true UFO does not mean to me that I can conclude that he lied. I can be scientifically unconvinced by his evidence, recognizing that it is not strong enough for his case to be judged true, while still not concluding

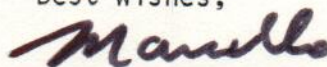
that he therefore must probably be lying. The thing that Phil seems not to want to understand is that I am not convinced by Gill. I also do recognize that he might well be lying (though I really see little evidence for that given all the information I have). Since the burden of proof is on Gill to prove he saw a UFO and that burden of proof demands strong evidence, I can rationally conclude that Gill has not made his case for the UFO. But Phil acts as though his failure to make his case must lead us to further conclude that Gill is probably lying. Here we encounter the reverse situation: the burden of proof now shifts to Klass to convince us that Gill was fabricating. And that, too, requires evidence commensurate with the seriousness of the charge.

Now there could be odd circumstances where the two reverse burdens of proof could come into the same situation. Hypothetically, imagine that Gill had claimed that the space ship fired bullets at all the natives and killed them all. He would then be up on trial for having himself shot the natives. He would give his space ship story as his evidence to clear himself. In a case like that we would be forced, perhaps, to decide whether or not Gill shot the natives, to free him or send him to jail. In a case like that, we would probably (as reasonable jurors) likely conclude that he was guilty and fabricating this tall tale. (On the other hand, we would here see a pretty good motive for making up such a story; something we don't have in the real situation.) But this hypothetical case would be one where we were being forced to make a decision. The real situation is not such a one. We can afford (or should be able to afford) to leave the question of Gill's honesty undecided (and thus leaving him as perceived as truthful since the burden to state the contrary would be on us). In the case of Gill, I would actually agree with his critics that the case is inadequately demonstrated that he encountered anything alien. Part of my problem with the Gill case is that it still seems to me that he might have encountered something quite earthly but secret. I realize that there are problems in explaining how such a secret weapon or plane could still be secret; but there are also problems with explaining why Gill would have lied about it and why his testimony was corroborated by the other witnesses. For all I know they all ate funny mushrooms. But I simply see much of this case as unresolvable at this time. It just does not really matter that much since I don't see the Gill case as proving alien (ET) craft anyway. His is merely a classic case of something unidentified rather than something really that bizarre (as evidenced by the fact that even Gill thought it was a military craft at the time). Given the degree to which the military regularly lies about what it is doing re such things, their lying seems more likely to me than Gill's lying. The Gill case is really not that much of what Sagan calls a "high strangeness" case anyway. I can understand the need to conjecture fabrication for the high strangeness cases (usually the CE-III cases) than I can for the low strangeness cases because other types of error are far more likely than fabrication when it comes to such cases. In the case of a CE-I or CE-II case, honest mistakes are far more likely and to be expected than in a CE-III case. Gill's case is not really a CE-III case in the full sense of abduction, etc.

Well, I hope this letter moves us towards constructive further communication.

Again, sorry for my delayed response.

Best wishes,



Marcello Truzzi